

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CONAKR 00700 01 OF 02 061709Z
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FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4202

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CONAKRY 0700

NODIS OUTSIDE AF

AF FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY MOOSE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: MILI, PEPR, GV, US
SUBJECT: PATROL BOATS FOR GUINEA

REF: (A) STATE 80087, (B) CONAKRY 558, (C) 77 STATE 115244,
(D) 77 STATE 115409, (E) 77 STATE 207984

1. SUMMARY: REVIEW OF US ARMS SALES POLICY GUIDELINES
RAISES QUESTIONS REGARDING NEGATIVE DECISION ON PATROL BOATS
FOR GUINEA (REF A) WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE BEFORE
CONVEYING DECISION TO PRIME MINISTER. IN A NUTSHELL,
PROVISION OF BOATS WOULD SEEM TO MEET ALL US POLICY
CRITERIA (REFS C, D AND E), WITH EXCEPTION OF COST AND
ECONOMIC IMPACT, AND THESE WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO SCALE DOWN
IN DISCUSSIONS WITH GOG. YOUR VIEWS AND ADVICE ARE
REQUESTED. END SUMMARY.

2. IN PREPARING FOR DISCUSSION WITH PRIME MINISTER BEAVOGUI,
I HAVE REVIEWED US ARMS SALES POLICY CABLES (REFS C, D AND E)
AND BEEN STRUCK BY EXTENT TO WHICH GUINEAN REQUEST
APPEARS TO MEET CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL.

A. IF THERE IS SUBSTANCE OF DIALLO'S IMPLICATION

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PAGE 02 CONAKR 00700 01 OF 02 061709Z

(PARA 2, REF B) THAT ACQUISITION OF ITS OWN COASTAL
PATROL BOATS WOULD ENABLE GOG TO DISPENSE WITH SOVIET
NAVAL PRESENCE, THIS POSSIBILITY WOULD SEEM TO
JUSTIFY USE OF ARMS TRANSFER AS AN "EXCEPTIONAL
FOREIGN POLICY IMPLEMENT", AS THE TRANSFER WOULD
EMPHATICALLY CONTRIBUTE TO US NATIONAL SECURITY
INTERESTS (PARA 2.B., REF D).

B. GOG REQUEST FOR PATROL CRAFT WAS INITIATED BY BEAVOGUI DURING HIS JUNE 1977 VISIT TO US AND HAS BEEN RAISED SEVERAL TIMES SINCE, ALWAYS AT THEIR INITIATIVE (PARA 4, REF E).

C. AS CONCEDED IN PARA 2, REF A, THE DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES GUINEA'S LEGITIMATE REQUIREMENT FOR A MEANS OF SURVEILLING ITS COASTLINE AND PROTECTING AGAINST UNAUTHORIZED FISHING OF ITS WATERS BY FOREIGN VESSELS. THE DEFENSIVE NATURE OF THE PATROL BOATS' MISSION IS CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD. THE DEPARTMENT HAS SAID IT WOULD LIKE TO SEE GUINEA ACQUIRE PATROL BOATS (VIA "ANOTHER FRIENDLY NATION") SO IT CAN EXERCISE ITS SOVEREIGN FUNCTIONS WITHOUT DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN VESSELS OR PERSONNEL (PARA 5.E, REF E).

D. ACQUISITION OF COASTAL PATROL BOATS WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT REPRESENT SIGNIFICANT ENHANCEMENT OF GUINEA'S MILITARY CAPABILITY, PARTICULARLY FOR OFFENSIVE ACTION, AS THE DEFENSIVE NATURE OF THE BOATS' MISSION IS UNCONTESTED. WE DO NOT BELIEVE SUCH ACQUISITION WOULD REPRESENT A THREAT TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND DO NOT EXPECT THAT THEY WOULD HAVE OBJECTIONS TO IT; INDEED, SIERRA LEONE AND SENEGAL IN PARTICULAR WOULD PROBABLY BE RELIEVED

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PAGE 03 CONAKR 00700 01 OF 02 061709Z

IF THE RESULT WERE REMOVAL OF THE SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE IN CONAKRY AND OFF THE GUINEA COAST (PARA 5.E, REF E).

E. PATROL CRAFT WOULD NOT REPRESENT FIRST INTRODUCTION OF NEWLY-DEVELOPED ADVANCED WEAPONS (PARA 7.B., REF C), AND GOG SHOULD HAVE THE ABILITY TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THE CRAFT. FEW, IF ANY, OFFICIAL OR PRIVATE AMERICANS WOULD BE NEEDED IN GUINEA TO SUPPORT THE SALE, AND IF ANY WERE, IT WOULD BE FOR A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME (PARA 5.E, REF E).

F. WITH REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS, WE DO NOT REPEAT NOT BELIEVE ACQUISITION OF PATROL BOATS (FROM FRANCE OR THE US) WOULD HAVE ANY BEARING ON THE SITUATION IN GUINEA EXCEPT TO GIVE US INDIRECT LEVERAGE TO INDUCE THE GOG INTO BETTER PERFORMANCE. HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IS MOVING IN A FAVORABLE DIRECTION, AND WE EXPECT FURTHER PRISONER RELEASES IN THE WAKE OF THE MONROVIA SUMMIT. THE SITUATION IS MUCH IMPROVED OVER WHAT IT WAS LAST YEAR WHEN THE

BOAT REQUEST WAS FIRST STUDIED INTENSIVELY IN WASHINGTON. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY CURRENT OUTFLOW OF POLITICAL REFUGEES; THE FLOW IS BACK INTO GUINEA PURSUANT TO SEKOU TOURE'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF BLANKET AMNESTY FOR REFUGEES LAST SUMMER. IN THE PAST, GUINEAN REFUGEES HAVE GENERALLY CROSSED GUINEA'S LONG AND LARGELY UNPOLICED LAND BORDERS, AND LITTLE USE HAS BEEN MADE OF THE SEA ROUTE; WE DO NOT BELIEVE PATROL CRAFT WOULD AFFECT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN GUINEA IN OTHER THAN POSITIVE DIRECTION (PARA 5.E, REF E).

G. EMBASSY HAS EXCELLENT CAPABILITY TO MONITOR THE PORT OF CONAKRY AND THE USE TO WHICH THE PATROL
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PAGE 04 CONAKR 00700 01 OF 02 061709Z

BOATS WOULD BE PUT (PARA 5.E., REF E). WE SEE NO LIKELIHOOD OF DIVERSION OF THE CRAFT TO ANOTHER COUNTRY (PARA 7.B., REF C).

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PAGE 01 CONAKR 00700 02 OF 02 061720Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 CONAKRY 0700

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3. THE ONLY PROBLEM I SEE CONCERNS THE COST OF THE CRAFT, REQUEST FOR USG FINANCING (OR GRANT), AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF REPAYMENT OF FMS OR OTHER LOAN (PARA 5.E., REF E). THE PRESENT GOG REQUEST AS FOR SIX CUTTERS COSTING ROUGHLY \$1 MILLION EACH. THAT

IS A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF MONEY, REPAYMENT OF WHICH WOULD REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT BURDEN TO GUINEA. IT IS HOWEVER MY IMPRESSION THAT GOG SELECTED THE CRAFT TYPE AS THE IDEAL, INDEPENDENT OF COST; ALL ALONG IT HAS BEEN OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE GOG WOULD BE WILLING CONSIDER SMALLER, MORE MODESTLY PRICED CRAFT WHICH COULD PERFORM PATROL FUNCTIONS PRACTICALLY AS WELL. (ONE OF THE "AFROFISH" BOATS, APPROXIMATELY 30 FEET LONG AND UNARMED, IS CURRENTLY BEING USED FOR THE PURPOSE). THERE MAY BE OTHER FINANCIAL APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM, SUCH AS COMMERCIAL SALE WITH EXIM OR OTHER SUPPORT, THAT MIGHT EASE THE FINANCIAL OR POLICY PROBLEM. MOREOVER, THE CRAFT HAVE A LEGITIMATE ECONOMIC FUNCTION AND WOULD PRESUMABLY BRING ECONOMIC BENEFIT IN CONTROLLING UNAUTHORIZED USE OF GUINEAN FISHING GROUNDS.

4. CONCLUSIONS: A. I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE
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PAGE 02 CONAKR 00700 02 OF 02 061720Z

TO TURN THE GOG DOWN COLD, AS INSTRUCTED REF A. THE CASE APPEARS TO MEET MOST POLICY CRITERIA (PARA 2 ABOVE), AND THE PROBLEM OF SIZE AND COST IS, I BELIEVE NEGOTIABLE.

B. MOST IMPORTANTLY, THIS APPEARS TO OFFER AN IDEAL, AND PROBABLY RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVE, OPPORTUNITY TO ACCOMPLISH A MAJOR US POLICY GOAL: REMOVAL OF THE SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE FROM GUINEA. THIS WOULD REPRESENT A CONCRETE STRATEGIC PLUS, WOULD HELP BREAK THE SOVIET ARMS MONOPOLY, WOULD CONTRIBUTE IMPORTANTLY TO THE DIMINUTION OF THE SOVIET PRESENCE AND ROLE IN GUINEA, AND WOULD REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT GESTURE THE US COULD MAKE IN RESPONSE TO THE MANY POSITIVE CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER US INTERESTS IN GUINEA AND WOULD DEMONSTRATE US COOPERATION AND SUPPORT FOR GUINEA. (OUR AID PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN UNIMPRESSIVE, AND OUR ABILITY TO RESPOND TO LIKELY REQUESTS WE SEE ON THE HORIZON SUCH AS A CALL FOR US TEACHERS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS TO REPLACE SOVIAT PERSONNEL WILL PROBABLY BE SEVERELY LIMITED).

C. I STRONGLY BELIEVE IT IS IN THE US NATIONAL INTEREST TO PURSUE THE PATROL BOAT QUESTION FURTHER WITH THE GOG TO SEE IF WE CANNOT COME TO SOME MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AGREEMENT. THE OPPORTUNITY IS THERE, AND THE PRICE (PARTICULARLY IF REDUCED) SEEMS RIDICULOUSLY SMALL WHEN COMPARED TO THE

DEFENSE AND OTHER INTERESTS INVOLVED. AT A TIME WHEN
THE USG IS DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER THE INCREASE IN SOVIET
MILITARY PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT,
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PAGE 03 CONAKR 00700 02 OF 02 061720Z

IT SEEMS INCOMPREHENSIBLE THAT WE SHOULD REJECT AN
OPPORTUNITY SUCH AS THE ONE CURRENTLY OFFERED US.

D. I APPRECIATE THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS
GIVEN CONSIDERATION TO THE GOG REQUEST; IS THERE
NOT HOWEVER A CHANCE FOR REEXAMINATION IN LIGHT
OF THE POINTS PRESENTED ABOVE THAT SEEM SO STRONGLY
AT VARIANCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION IN THIS
MATTER? WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR VIEWS AND
ASSESSMENT OF THE POSSIBILITIES.
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